

REMARKS

The Examiner's action dated January 21, 2009, has been received, and its contents carefully noted.

SUMMARY OF SUBSTANCE OF INTERVIEW

A personal interview was held with Examiner Ralis on March 3, 2009. During that interview, the contribution of the invention over the prior art was discussed in detail. In particular, it was pointed out that the applied references do not disclose a steam iron having a part having multiple functions constituting at the same time a heat shield and a skirt of the iron, which part constitutes at least in part the steam chamber above the soleplate and comprises a downwardly extending rib that extends down to the soleplate and limits the steam chamber laterally, and the iron further comprises at least one joint that forms a seal between the rib and the soleplate and joins the rib to the soleplate.

The Examiner acknowledged that the amendments made herein to claim 1 could potentially read over the applied references. The Examiner further agreed that if the present claims are not found to be allowable, the next action in this case would be non-final.

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In order to advance matters, claim 1 has been amended to be in the form of the proposed amended claim that was discussed during the personal interview.

Claim 1 previously specified that the part having multiple functions comprises a downwardly extending rib that limits the steam chamber laterally. Claim 1 has now been amended to clarify that the rib extends down to the soleplate. However, it must be pointed out that the fact that the rib extends down to the soleplate was already at least implicit in claim 1, which previously specified that the rib extends downwardly and that the soleplate comprises a heating body having an upper face constituting a heating wall of the steam chamber.

This addition to claim 1 is clearly supported by the present specification. For example, at page 3, lines 18-19, it is stated that the multifunction part is in contact with the soleplate, while at page 5, lines 21-23, it is disclosed that the bottom of part 8 has a peripheral rib 81 that extends to the soleplate. Finally, at page 5, lines 29-31, it is stated that attachment pieces clamp part 8 and soleplate 2 against one another.

Claim 1 has been further amended to specify that the at least one joint forming a seal joins the rib to the soleplate. At page 3, lines 18-19 of the specification, it is

stated that the multifunction part is in contact with the soleplate through elastomer foam seals, while at page 5, lines 26-31, is stated that the bottom of rib 81 retains joint 84, which is a silicone foam seal, and that part 8, of which rib 81 forms a part, and soleplate 2 are clamped against one another by compressing all of the joints, which ensures the sealing between the parts. Finally, original claim 6 specifies that part 8 is in contact with the soleplate through elastomer foam seals.

Of course, the fact that rib 81 extends down to the soleplate and that a seal is provided to join the rib to the soleplate is readily apparent from the detailed application drawings.

The prior art rejection presented in section 9 of the action is respectfully traversed for the reason that the novel iron defined in the application claims, and particularly in amended parent claim 1, is not disclosed in or suggested by any reasonable combination of the teachings of the applied references.

Specifically, the steam iron according to the present invention includes a part (8) having multiple functions that "constitutes at least in part the steam chamber (3) above the soleplate (2), the part having multiple functions further comprises a downwardly extending rib that

extends down to the soleplate and limits the steam chamber laterally and the iron further comprises at least one joint forming a seal between the rib and the soleplate and joining the rib to the soleplate." (underlining added)

Claim 1 also specifies that the claimed steam chamber is bounded by both a heating body and the downwardly extending ribs belonging to the part having multiple functions.

As regards the patentable distinctions between the present invention, particularly as now defined in claim 1, and the prior art, the Examiner is referred to the arguments presented in the response filed on October 28, 2008. To avoid needless repetition, those arguments are incorporated herein by reference and the Examiner is requested to again carefully consider them.

The previous rejection was based on the view, erroneous in applicant's opinion, that a downwardly extending wall portion of a plastic skirt 56 of the Eckert patent could somehow be equated to the downwardly extending rib defined in claim 1 of the present application. It is submitted that this view is erroneous because the downwardly extending wall portion of plastic skirt 56 of Eckert does not surround, or delimit, a steam chamber, but rather surrounds an upper portion of extraction channel 40. That downwardly extending

wall portion of skirt 56 certainly does not extend to the heating soleplate of the iron disclosed in that reference, and does not even extend down to the bottom of extraction channel 40. Therefore, it does not laterally delimit either the steam chamber or the extraction channel.

As has already been pointed out in the previous amendment, extraction channel 40 is not a part of a steam chamber because steam is not produced in channel 40. In point of fact, Eckert states, at column 3, lines 57-58, that slight cooling of the steam may occur inside channel 40. In a steam chamber, steam is produced and does not experience any cooling.

Finally, it must be pointed out that the statement at column 4, lines 39-40 of the reference is clearly incorrect and is inconsistent with the reference drawings and all of the other portions of the reference specification. Moreover, that incorrect statement in the Eckert specification does not even mention skirt 56 or include any indication that any part of skirt 56 laterally delimits the steam chamber. Of course, an erroneous statement in a patent specification cannot be considered to imply any other disclosure, such as a disclosure relating to the location of any part of plastic skirt 56.

In view of the foregoing, it is requested that the rejections of record be reconsidered and withdrawn, that the

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pending claims be allowed and that the application be found in allowable condition.

If the above amendment should not now place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to call undersigned counsel to resolve any remaining issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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